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S E C R E T CONAKRY 000184

SIPDIS

DEA / PARIS FOR R. HOUSTON / B. HALEY / T. HEDRICK  
DEA / LAGOS FOR S. GAYE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/2018  
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [GV](#) [PGOV](#) [DEA](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#)  
SUBJECT: SEIZED DRUGS FINALLY INCINERATED...OR WERE THEY?

REF: A. CONAKRY 00148  
[1](#)B. CONAKRY 00155  
[1](#)C. PARIS 00838  
[1](#)D. CONAKRY 00166

Classified By: ARSO Elizabeth Esparza for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: On April 11, 2008, Guinean police seized a shipment of cocaine, exact quantity unknown, and detained six suspects believed to be of Latin American origin (Reftel A, B). All USG requests for additional information regarding the details of the seizure or the suspects have gone unanswered (Reftel C). The mission focused its efforts to ensure the destruction of the drugs and the result of these efforts proves that corrupt elements of the government are in full control. Exactly one month after the seizure, Ambassador and ARSO attended the alleged incineration of 390 kilos of cocaine. The incineration was a farce that fooled no one and highlighted the possible complicity of the Guinean Minister of Interior and Security and high-level police officials. END SUMMARY.

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A LONG-ANTICIPATED EVENT  
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[1](#)2. (S) Over a ten-day period, the Mission in collaboration with the British Ambassador made several unsuccessful attempts to discuss the transparent destruction of the drugs. Finally, on May 2, 2008, the US and UK Ambassadors met with the Minister of Interior and Security and were given well-rehearsed assurances of the GOG's commitment to combating drug trafficking and an invitation to view the drugs, destruction (Reftel D). The incineration initially planned for May 7 and rescheduled for May 9, finally took place on May 10, 2008.

[1](#)3. (U) GOG officials in attendance included Director of OCAD Thermite Mara, Deputy Director of OCAD Zakaria Cisse, Police Director General Sekou Bangoura, Police Controller General Madifing Diane, President of the National Committee Against Drug Trafficking (CNLD) Gare, Deputy General Secretary of CNLD Aguibou Tall, and approximately three dozen OCAD agents. The Minister of Justice and the Minister of Interior and Security were also present.

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EXCUSES, EXCUSES, EXCUSES  
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[1](#)4. (S) After consultations with DEA Paris, Ambassador requested permission to take a random sample of the cocaine for testing purposes. Controller General Diane automatically agreed, causing an immediate backlash from Director General Bangoura and OCAD Director Mara. Director General Bangoura found several excuses, to include concern over Ambassador and

ARSO,s health and safety. He also explained that the cocaine had been treated with chemicals, rendering it useless. Director General Bangoura, in his usual arrogant and condescending fashion, refused to address the Ambassador, claiming that this was not a matter of diplomacy, but police business. OCAD Director Mara,s enraged response included direct accusations of infringement upon Guinean sovereignty. This heated exchange took place in a very public setting and was documented by the private press.

¶5. (S) Controller General Diane reports directly to Minister of Interior and Security Keita. OCAD Director Mara reports to Director General Bangoura, who reports to Controller General Diane. The interaction between these officials demonstrates an obvious disregard for rank and seniority, which is especially concerning given that respect for hierarchy is usually the norm in Guinean culture. This begs the questions, "who's in charge?".

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THEATRICAL PRODUCTION  
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¶6. (U) Upon the arrival of Minister of Interior and Security Keita and Minister of Justice Paulette Kourouma, the Ambassador,s request for a random sample of the cocaine was quickly denied. The pile was immediately doused with gasoline and ceremoniously lit on fire by the Minister of Justice. The President of the National Committee Against Drug Trafficking was very dramatic in announcing the destruction of 160 kilos of marijuana, 390 kilos of cocaine and 43 boxes of pharmaceutical products (later explained to be expired ibuprofen). The destroyed narcotics were reportedly valued at 6.5 million dollars.

¶7. (S) After the incineration, ARSO was permitted to take a sample from a pre-designated package of cocaine. The OCAD Deputy Director, the only individual that was allowed to get near the pile of narcotics, handpicked the package. On May 6, 2008, RSO FSN Investigator received a call from XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX, who in the past weeks has provided RSO with sensitive information on the drug seizure (Reftel B). XXXXXXXXXXXX stated that the GoG planned to burn packages of flour. ARSO is unable to prove that the cocaine was in fact substituted with flour; however, the GoG,s lack of cooperation and vehement rejection to a request for random sampling raises troubling questions about the GoG's interest in transparency. And as the Ambassador,s driver very keenly observed, "I know the smell of burning marijuana, and I didn,t smell anything." The entire event was a theatrical production.

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COMMENT  
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¶8. (S) The event was a real eye-opener and a facade. The incineration was a ridiculous attempt by the GoG to prove that a law enforcement campaign against narcotics exists. If anything was proven, it was that the traffickers' influence has reached the highest levels of the government. There is an obvious fracture within the security forces, and only a handful of officials appear to be fighting to carry out legitimate duties. The clear reluctance and open animosity displayed by all the senior Ministry of Interior and Security (MIS) officials and the diffident response of the Ministers to the Ambassador's request suggest complicity at the highest levels of the Ministry. The silver-lining of the event is that the heated debate and ridiculous protestation by MIS to the Ambassador's request for a random sampling were witnessed and recorded by elements of the Guinean media (state-owned and independent).

CARTER